

How do bed bugs live and reproduce?

Adult bed bugs live for up to a year. Females lay up to 500 eggs during a lifetime. After a week or two, eggs hatch into nymphs that feed on blood as soon as they find an animal host, usually a person or pet. Bed bugs typically produce up to three generations per year in our climate.

Bed bugs sometimes feed during the day, but they are active mainly at night. Bed bugs will crawl out of their hiding places, searching for a person to bite. After feeding for a few minutes, they crawl back to their hiding places for several days before they feed again.

Bed bugs usually hide within 5 to 20 feet of where people sleep. They do not have nests like ants or bees, but tend to gather in tiny crevices and other hiding places, especially in mattresses, box springs, bed frames, and head-boards.

Bed bugs can survive months without feeding. Once a home is infested, leaving it empty for several weeks or months is no guarantee that the bed bugs will be gone.

What health effects can be caused by exposure to bed bugs?

Bed bugs are a nuisance. Bites can itch and swell. People sensitive to bites can have a raised, red swelling at each bite site. Delayed reactions can also occur with symptoms appearing several days after being bitten. Antihistamines and corticosteroids may be prescribed to reduce allergic reactions, and antiseptic or antibiotic ointments to prevent infection.

People who are frequently bitten by bed bugs may also develop a sensitivity syndrome that can include jumpiness, nervousness & sleeplessness. Removing the bed bugs or relocating the person can cause the syndrome to disappear over time.

Bed bugs leave behind feces, casings and other material. Studies suggest that these materials are allergens associated with asthmatic reactions.

Although bed bugs feed on blood, there is no evidence that bed bugs transmit blood-borne diseases from one person to another.

Additional References

A Code of Practice for the Control of Bed Bug Infestations in Australia; Westmead Hospital et al July 2006..
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Armed Forces Pest Management Board Technical Guide # 44: **Bed Bugs - Importance, Biology, and Control Strategies**, August 2006.
<http://www.afpmb.org/pubs/tims/TG44/TG44.pdf>

Bed Bugs Fact Sheet; Cornell University Cooperative Extension, August 2003.
<http://counties.cce.cornell.edu/suffolk/grownet/insect-pests/bedbug.htm>

Bed Bugs Fact Sheet; Westmead Hospital, NSW Australia, November 2003.
<http://medent.usyd.edu.au/fact/bedbugs.html>

Bed Bugs Fact Sheet; Univ. of Kentucky Dept. of Entomology, February 2006.
<http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Entomology/entfacts/struct/ef636.htm>

Bed Bug Information Website
<http://www.bedbug.org.au/>

Some Basic Facts About

Bed Bugs



Rhode Island



**Department of
HEALTH**

**Office of
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How can I control a bed bug infestation?

Bed bugs are hard pests to control. Treatments must be very thorough or the bed bugs will soon be back.

To get rid of bed bugs, in most cases the Rhode Island Department of Health recommends hiring a professional pest control firm[†].

Professionals will carefully inspect all places where bed bugs may hide. A pest control professional will also spray an approved insecticide in cracks and other hiding places.

Any infected items like mattresses or upholstered furniture must be thrown out or treated. These treatments can include:

- Heat and/or cold treatments (whole-house or room)
- Steaming or using special vacuums on mattresses, beds, etc.
- Closing off electrical boxes and other hiding places with a silicone-based sealant

Occupants can help make sure bed bugs don't come back.

- Put mattresses and pillows in plastic covers
- Wash clothing, sheets, towels, etc. in hot water and detergent

Do not use any insecticide on a mattress unless the label specifically discusses application to a mattress. Most household sprays are not suitable for application to mattresses.

What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs are insects that feed on blood. Their bites are often itchy, and sometimes painful.

Adult bed bugs are about ¼ inch long and reddish brown, with oval, flat bodies. They are sometimes mistaken for ticks or cockroaches.

Nymphs are immature bed bugs and are smaller and lighter in color than adults. Bed bugs do not fly, but can move quickly over floors, walls, ceilings and other surfaces. Female bed bugs lay their eggs in cracks and other hidden areas. The eggs are tiny, whitish, and hard to see without a magnifying glass (individual eggs are about the size of a dust spec).

Why are bed bugs making a comeback?

Bed bugs are a growing problem everywhere. By spraying for insects less often, and using less dangerous chemicals when we do spray, our homes are safer for our families. Our homes are also less toxic for bed bugs.

Bed bugs are hitchhikers. They travel by hiding in luggage, clothing, beds or furniture. Outbreaks can often be traced to travel. This can make bed bugs a special problem for hotels, motels, apartments and other places where people come and go on a frequent basis.

Use of second-hand furniture is another way that people bring bed bugs into their homes. Once bed bugs are introduced, they spread from room to room throughout a building.

Keeping a clean home can limit cockroach and rodent problems, but will have little effect on bed bugs.

How can I spot a bed bug infestation?

You may have a bed bug infestation if you see these signs:

- Raised red bites on one or more family members
- Live bed bugs
- Small red pellets or rusty spots on sheets
- Tiny eggs in cracks or crevices near the bed
- Skin or casings shed by bed bugs
- Musty or “buggy” odor[‡].

Seeing two or more of these signs indicates that there is a bed bug problem in that room.

Who is responsible for getting rid of a bed bug infestation?

Rhode Island's Housing Maintenance and Occupancy Code [RIGL 45-24.3] states that if the infestation is limited to a single dwelling unit, then extermination is the responsibility of the occupant. However, if the infestation exists in two or more of the dwelling units, or in the shared or public parts of any dwelling containing two or more dwelling units, then extermination is the responsibility of the owner.

Enforcement of the Housing Maintenance and Occupancy Code is the responsibility of your city/town Minimum Housing Program. You should contact this Program if your landlord or building owner has not addressed a bed bug infestation that involves a common area or two or more dwelling units.

[‡] The “buggy” or musty odor is not always obvious. A significant bed bug infestation may still be present even without the odor.

[†] Pest control professionals are licensed by RIDEM-Division of Agriculture. Please call (401) 222-2781 for additional information about licensed pest control professionals.